

LABOUR ORGANISER

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PRICE TENPENCE

(Double Number)

THANK YOU!

THE best thanks of the whole Labour movement are due to the 617 men and women who took on the heavy responsibilities of Agent at the General Election. The law of elections is strict and intricate, but most Agents seem to have avoided the many pitfalls which beset the path of those managing Parliamentary elections. Fewer than 250 full-time Agents acted, and the others were volunteers, not all of whom were able to secure release from their ordinary occupations to fight the election. More than half of all the Agents were doing the job for the first time, and they did it well, taking into account all the circumstances under which they had to work. The Agents could not have functioned at all if they had not been served by an army of volunteers—a thin red line in some constituencies. By their hard work several notable victories were won in constituencies where the Tories thought they would win, and the Tory tide was stemmed everywhere. In the backward areas our workers did not have the stimulus of a possible victory to sustain them, but their contribution was no less valuable than that of those with seats to win. Our sincere thanks to all who helped.

A. L. Williams,
National Agent

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PRICE TENPENCE

Defeat not Disaster

IF there is one thing that the recent General Election has done it has been to prove that the behaviour of the British electorate generally cannot be forecast by the application of mathematical formulæ to the results in a few constituencies.

It is true that there are national trends in all General Elections, and recently these have been revealed by the Gallup polls, from which it was obvious that in the 1955 General Election the trend was not favourable to Labour. Even so, results were by no means uniform, the Labour share of the votes cast varying considerably, some constituencies actually showing an increase, thus confirming the view expressed in the May issue of the *Labour Organiser* that local factors are still very important.

It is perhaps understandable that those who had been expressing the opinion that the candidate and his constituency organisation have no effect on election results should now find an explanation for Labour's defeat in the inability of our organisation to poll its full strength, i.e. the record figure of 1951. Labour has suffered a defeat, but before drawing lessons it is important to get the facts right.

Falls compared

The Labour vote fell by some one and a half million compared with four years ago, but the Tory vote fell also—and taking into account the uncontested Northern Ireland elections in 1951, the fall is not far short of half a million.

The Labour vote in 1955, when the

Tories won a majority of 68 over Labour, actually was greater than the Labour vote in 1945, when the Labour Government had a majority of 180 over the Tories.

The 1945 result was complicated by the Liberal share of the total vote, which was then 9.5%, but since then the Tories have been successful in building up their share of the total vote, though in 1951 it was less than Labour's, and even this year was still less than 50% of the total votes cast, compared with Labour's share of 46.2%. It takes some 6,000 more votes to win a seat for Labour than it does to win a seat for the Tories.

Forecasters wrong

The high polls in the two previous General Elections led forecasters to assume that the poll this time would be high, but in fact it was 76.8%, only a little higher than the 1945 and 1935 polls.

It looks as if radio, television, and the national Press have not the influence that it was believed they had, and that the turn-out in any single constituency is influenced in no small measure by such factors as the personality of the candidates and the strength of the rival election machines. This is supported by the much higher than average polls in most marginal constituencies. This time, too, it looks as if the sitting Member had an advantage: seats were lost by Labour with majorities of less than 2,000 in four constituencies where the previous Member was not contesting again.

From reports it is apparent that the Tories did not have the advantage in postal votes that they enjoyed in the last election. Reports show that except for a few constituencies the total postal vote

fell substantially and that our share of it increased—at least in those constituencies where parties had given attention to this essential matter.

In the event, redistribution favoured the Tories. Four seats held by Labour and two seats held by the Tories disappeared, and eleven new seats were created, of which Labour won only three and the Tories eight. Eight of the seats lost by Labour were adversely affected by major boundary changes, as were two of the seats lost by the Tories.

Redistribution Gains

The Tory gain from redistribution was not as great as it might first appear. Two of the new seats won by them were won by majorities of less than 2,000, and of the Labour seats weakened by redistribution, four were lost with majorities of less than 2,000. The Tories saved several of their seats which had been weakened by redistribution by narrow majorities. Several Labour marginal seats were strengthened, and they may have been lost but for this.

Labour was defeated, but it was defeat, not disaster, and if the right lessons are drawn, and acted upon, the defeat can be for the good of the Party ultimately.

In future elections, unless there is some burning issue such as an economic or international crisis to drive even apathetic electors to the polls, the high percentage turn-outs of 1950 and 1951 are not inevitable.

There are now 121 constituencies where the seat is held by majorities of less than 3,000. The attractiveness of the candidates and their policies, and the efficiency of the election machines, will determine not only who will hold these seats, but also the government which will follow the next election.

Register changes

It must not be forgotten that the Register undergoes great changes in between elections: many new electors go on and death claims many of the old. These changes probably have benefited Labour in recent times, but it does not necessarily follow that they will continue to do so.

The making of Socialists remains one of the major tasks of the Labour Party, and this means not only unceasing propaganda and education, but also that we must keep our theories up to date, other-

wise they will lose all relevance in a rapidly changing society.

The formulation of Socialist policies and gaining support for them are jobs which the Labour Party organisation is especially suited. But the winning of elections requires a different technique and, let it be confessed, sometimes different men.

Much more attention must be given to the technical aspect of electioneering and to the recruitment and training of those who have to staff the machine in the constituencies.

Canvassing, compiling records, registering postal voters, tracing removals, organising literature distribution, and doing the other mundane tasks of the election worker, are no less important than making speeches or writing articles. Indeed, unless these jobs are done well, especially in the key places, other forms of activity are of no avail.

Our task is to make more Socialists and to construct an efficient electoral machine. This dual task is not beyond our capacity, and if it is undertaken with energy, patience and skill, we can face future elections with confidence.

PETITION LODGED

SINN FEIN candidates won Fermanagh & South Tyrone and Mid Ulster constituencies by the narrow margin of 261 and 260 votes respectively in straight fight with Ulster Unionists. The previous Members, Mr. C. Healy (Anti-Partitionist) and Mr. M. O'Neill (Irish Republican) did not stand.

An election petition has now been lodged at the Royal Courts of Justice, Belfast, by the unsuccessful Ulster Unionist candidate for Fermanagh Tyrone, Lt.-Col. R. G. Grosvenor. The petitioner seeks to unseat his opponent Mr. Philip Clarke, on the grounds that he is a disqualified person because he is a convicted felon and is serving a sentence of ten years penal servitude in Belfast gaol.

The petition also requests that Lt.-Col. Grosvenor should be declared elected in Mr. Clarke's place.

Two Ulster High Court Judges will be appointed to hear the petition, and the decision is awaited with interest.

Why Labour Lost

HAVING survived a surfeit of inquests on the Labour Party, conducted by a succession of self-appointed coroners who subsist by scribbling for the 'popular Press', let us ruminate awhile on the lamentable fact that we did not win the General Election of 1955. There have been so many clever people explaining the result that I felt I had better leave them to it, but the Editor appears to think otherwise. So I am doing as I am bid.

As my capital does not run to an electronic computer I have to use my own brain, such as it is, and can still do simple sums on a slate. So, just like other more expert mathematicians, I did a certain amount of laborious adding and subtracting and working out of percentages; but evermore came back to the brutal truth that the Tories polled more votes than we did and won more seats than we did.

A PART from that, the only thing that matters in settling what sort of Government the country shall have, you can prove anything you want from the figures; that is, if you know a bit about fiddling with figures.

Searching far and wide for some satisfactory reason for the considerable reduction in Labour's total poll, I have had valuable guidance from two main sources, viz., (i) sundry newspapers, and (ii) the lips of one or two ardent local politicians. I pray your patience whilst I lay these grave advices before you for your deep consideration.

(i) The nation's leading horror comic, which has quite recently performed the greatest miracle of the century by producing a journalistic offshoot more juvenile than itself, made a positively exhausting investigation, lasting three days. And it delivered its verdict under three heads. Firstly, the leaders of the Labour Party are too old, too tired, and too weak. Secondly, there is a Welsh politician who is afflicted with the Welsh temperament, which sometimes make him a disturbing bedfellow. Thirdly, the Tory

engine was perfectly tuned, lubricated, super-charged, whereas that of the Labour Party was rusty, creaking and bad.

The main evidence for this third conclusion appears to be the suggestion that newspaper scribes were received with greater hospitality at Tory Headquarters than in Transport House. Feeling, perhaps, that this is hardly enough, it mentions also that the Labour Party employs only half as many constituency agents as the Tory Party, and pays them only half as much.

The General Secretary of the Agents' Union, who has also reviewed the General Election, repeats and emphasises this last point. Well, there's nothing like leather.

(ii) I derived my chief political enlightenment when I attended as a ward delegate at the June meeting of the General Committee of my constituency party. Our incorrigible Anti-Imperialist (*vide Labour Organiser*, Jan. 1955, p. 5) addressed us fiercely. The Labour Party, he said, had betrayed the Cause. In the Election Manifesto it had whittled down Socialism almost to nothing. We had to get back to the spirit of the Pioneers.

IT occurred to my simple mind that the Pioneers had indeed laid the foundations of the Party but they didn't win many elections. Anyhow, this delegate was convinced that 1,500,000 people, who are not socialists at all, deliberately refrained from voting for Labour candidates because the Manifesto failed to scream 'Socialism' in every line from the title to the imprint. It seemed a rather cock-eyed argument to me.

The same meeting at an earlier stage had discussed its sombre council electioneering. A successful candidate was aggrieved that he was bound by the policy manifesto which was common to all the wards; if he could have watered it down he would have had a bigger majority. A defeated woman candidate was sure she

could have won if she could have hidden her Labour Party incubus.

You must, if you can, reconcile these contradictions for yourself. In the multitude of counsel there *may* be wisdom, but only if you reject most of the counsel.

Somehow, all the explanations made so dogmatically verbally and in print by the experts were not satisfying, and I turn to my own limited experiences and observations.

IF there was any national attempt at scaremongering I did not notice it, but there were a few local efforts in a retail sort of way. One Tory candidate, well-known among his associates as an intellectual fly-weight, scaled the Everest of Frightfulness, and made my flesh creep, by discovering that if Labour won Mr. Gaitskell (whom I had always thought a pleasant kind of chap) would put gaspers up to ten shillings a packet and make beer five bob a pint.

Don't dismiss him with a careless laugh. This statesman has come to stay, for long before now he would have been in the other place if his old man had not learnt the secret of everlasting life.

Is the Labour Party fully insured against third-party risks? The question arises because in two or three restricted areas there was an increase in votes cast for Liberal candidates which calls for some examination. Certainly, the Party which lost sixty deposits was not responsible for the Labour Party's election defeat. Nonetheless, the number of Liberals who reached second place and put Labour candidates at the bottom of the poll is a new and disconcerting factor.

The electoral implications of a possible extension of this phenomenon are disturbing. The situation requires more than an accurate assessment. Carefully planned action by those responsible for the direction of propaganda and the development of organisation will be needed, without waiting till the next election.

HOWEVER, it is not the Liberals, nor the Tories, nor the manifold shortcomings of the Labour Party (so plainly disclosed by gloating foes and malicious 'friends'), that are accountable for our failure to win this time. Nor will it do to pick upon Mr. A., Mr. B., Lord W. (elderly businessman turned politician and peer), or any other prominent or notorious person who occurs to you, as the snake in

the grass or the nigger in the woodpile.

The fellow who decided the result of the General Election was described with some particularity in the *Labour Organiser* in June, July and August, 1953. His name, for want of a better, is Jimmy Green. In slum or pre-fab, flat, council house, or semi-detached respectability complete with little garage, he persists, verdant as ever.

During the election campaign, in hospital, in the street, on public service vehicles and in places where men gather to renew their strength, I mingled with the populace and listened to their talk.

I heard the most vigorous condemnation of the behaviour of a fellow called Marciano. Much public anger was displayed over two or three football matches played somewhere in Europe where the games appear to have been rather rough.

ALSO, I learnt a great deal about Trade Unionism from a group of business men who had never seen a rule book or a branch meeting. But of this election which was to mould the future of Britain and for good or ill affect the condition of the world, I heard not a word.

And by the million Jimmy Green voted Tory, and in more millions he did not vote at all.

The high objective of the Labour Party is by orderly processes to transform our present higgledy-piggledy national structure into a socialist society. Elections are a yardstick by which we can measure rather roughly, our progress in the accomplishment of this supreme purpose. The setback of 1955 is a sharp lesson for us all if we are willing to learn it.

ACTS of Parliament may make the framework of the national life and control the economic condition of us all but a socialist society can only be built by a socialist people. Jimmy Green, in his bewildering variety, is the raw material from which we have to produce convinced socialists by the million. Our educational work must be redoubled.

And, whether from election agents or canvassers, let us have no more twaddle about being unable to get 'our people' out. They, the politically-purposeless millions are not our people. We haven't yet made them ours. That task still lies to our hand, and it now confronts the Labour Party with its greatest challenge.

Nominations were my Headache

WHEN asked to pick out an item of the election procedure which caused me most worry and concern, I unhesitatingly plumped on nominating the candidate.

It was not until Monday, the 16th May had come and gone that the dread of some mishap was eased. Each day the list of candidates was checked against newspaper announcements of nominations; each day the list of ticks against names grew—but oh! so slowly. Each day I said, “Why do the So-and-So’s always wait until the last moment?” I know that candidates and election agents like a glass of sherry with the returning officer, but why so late in visiting him?

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The more I thought of the procedure, the more I wondered whether or not all possible information had been given. My mind turned over these points of procedure time and time again.

Would they fill in the correct day for date of publication of Notice of Election?
Would the details of the candidate be in order?

Would the proposers, seconders and assenters append their names properly?
Would they make certain that more than one nomination paper was handed in?
Would they check to see that no person signed more than one nomination paper?
Would they make sure that it was the candidate or the proposer or seconder that actually delivered the nomination paper?

Would the consent to nomination be handed in, duly witnessed?

Would the deposit be paid?

Worst of all—was there something I had forgotten?

Some fleeting relief was offered by the fact that a few Tory election agents appeared to be having their difficulties, but that gave rise to the gnawing thought that if professional agents could make mistakes, what about our voluntary agents?

We were informed that in one instance objection was made to the description of a candidate as “Minister of —”. It was claimed that such a description contravened Parliamentary Election Rule 7(3) as

it did refer to the candidate’s political activity. Our election agent did the correct thing in notifying his opposite number that he was making the objection. In order to be perfectly safe, fresh nomination papers were deposited. On this occasion, they bore the description, “Batchelor of Arts, Cambridge”.

We were also given to understand that nomination papers were handed in by a Conservative election agent, who was neither proposer nor seconder. Objection was made, and this meant that fresh nomination papers were delivered. I understand that further objection was made regarding the description of the candidate, but the returning officer ruled that it was made too late.

If agents need a mental exercise, read Parliamentary Election Rule 1, which deals with the making of objections to nomination papers.

According to the *Municipal Journal*, mistakes were made. They report that one election agent sent a nomination paper by post; another omitted the description of the candidate. Others had the wrong electoral letter against the electoral number, but the most frequent mistake of all was the wrong electoral number against the signature of the elector.

The Journal goes on to say that it is suggested in a certain quarter that candidates, on presenting the necessary nomination documents, should have them immediately examined by the returning officer and, if they prove to be in order, for the returning officer to give an immediate certificate of legal nomination, which is not open to challenge.

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This, it is felt, would eliminate the present right to objection and take worries off the shoulders of the election agent and candidate. Needless to say there are others who might have more restful nights if such a provision were made!

All my fears, however, proved to be unfounded. All our nominations were in order. My apologies, therefore, to election agents for holding doubts as to their ability to get candidates duly nominated—but I still wish that so many would not wait until the last day before getting their candidate nominated!

LEN SIMS

Was this a TV Election ?

WEEKS before Polling Day the Press had christened it the 'TV Election'. Nobody quite knew what it meant at the time, and even now it is far from clear. But however long we argue about whether it decided the floaters, or brought out the supporters, or disheartened the enemy we can agree on one thing. In this campaign TV emerged as a major propaganda weapon.

TOTAL AUDIENCE

The total audience it reached was many times greater than all the meetings (and who knows, all the canvassing too) put together. It brought the Party Leaders right into millions of homes to make their case quietly and unchecked, to those who might otherwise never have heard it. Its audience alone was so big as to frighten both political parties, and particularly the people picked to appear.

Inevitably in building up our organisation again for next time the TV campaign needs careful assessment. Sound radio broadcasts are already well established. They are simple to do, from a technical point of view, and have settled into a pretty standard approach to a pretty familiar audience. They play an important part in any campaign, but except in passing I think it wiser not to refer to them but to concentrate on the new horror of the cathode ray tube battle.

The first party political TV appeared in the 1951 Election when Christopher Mayhew scored a direct hit on a Conservative Central Office Cost of Living Graph. But it was only two years ago that the regular TV party politicals started. Since then both parties have been experimenting in the techniques of presentation. Both the Tories and ourselves have tried film, interviews, discussions, and mixtures of all three. We have succeeded in persuading even the most senior of our leaders to risk an appearance. And an enormous

risk it is, since a flop on TV is a flop on a monumental scale.

It was therefore with this limited experience behind us that we went into the campaign. Each party had three TV programmes and the Liberals one. The first Tory appearance was built around the personality of Harold Macmillan. He introduced a film depicting the Government's record set by contrast against the Socialist failure. With one or two minor technical faults the film was excellent propaganda and I thought very effective. But poor Harold was a miserable failure. He looked ill at ease and when he did remember his script it was quite unlike even his normal pompous manner.

The first lesson therefore was learnt. If you want a politician to be effective you must set him in a situation which is natural to him and not try to make him into something new. We also re-learned what every student of the documentary film knows, that an impression can be conveyed much more effectively and economically by film than by speech.

Mr. Attlee headed our bill in following next. Every effort had been made to put him in surroundings that were natural and in which he could relax and reflect and be himself. It was to that extent a complete success. He came over as a kindly, wise man deserving of confidence and trust.

A CRITICISM

If there is a criticism of it to make it is perhaps that it was excellent TV but bad election TV. Presenting a rounded portrait of a leader may be fine in between elections but it possibly lacked the controversial hard hitting qualities needed in a campaign.

This fault—if it was a fault—we tried to remedy in our next programme: Edith Summerskill and Harold Wilson on the Cost of Living. It was simple and controversial in conception. We set out to show how prices have risen, why they have risen, who had been hurt and what w

would do about it. We used a little film to introduce and end it and a lot of examples in the studio itself. Both Edith and Harold came over as personalities, competent and vigorous.

A storm of argument followed the programme and the Tories flattered us with a special leaflet of denunciation. Perhaps the failings of the programme were not apparent to the viewers. But those who worked on it will never forget the last frantic hours leading up to the broadcast. A programme of that kind is intensely complicated and we just did not have the equipment to do it smoothly.

A TEAM

The next two programmes, one from each side, were conceived with the same object: to present a team—or members of it—dealing with the issues of the Election. The Tories used fifteen editors to put the questions and we used one man only, William Pickles. In some ways they gained by exposing themselves to the hostile questioner. But it was a bedraggled performance because the editors took up far too much time and the questions they put were not particularly good or relevant.

We, on the other hand, were able to fire short sharp bursts at our team and I think we gained a victory on points. At any rate it's an arguable proposition. In any future campaign some such technique would be used again.

The final broadcast was the Prime Minister's. He talked straight into a camera for fifteen minutes. It was quiet, competent and brilliantly effective. His content and approach was ideal and he did what no other political figure to-day is trained to do—a fireside chat on the screen. Make no mistake about it, it was a stupendous feat.

THE LESSONS

What then are the lesson to be drawn from all this? First it is better to do a bad programme in which a politician is at ease, than a clever one in which he is unnatural and uncomfortable. There is no great loss in sticking to simplicity if you are in doubt. People watching by choice appreciate sincerity above everything and if an animated graph conflicts with that sincerity, then scrap the graph.

There will always be argument about whether you should aim to hearten supporters, woo floaters or dismay enemies. Certainly we should not be afraid of con-

troversy, but rather seek to stimulate it. In fact TV should, properly, set the pace of the campaign and not just be an adjunct to other forms of propaganda. No doubt that will be true next time.

What is vital now is that in the party political television programmes done every year we should train up the leaders of the party to the Eden standard of performance and beyond. In this training we can project them as personalities, likeable and trustworthy. We must experiment with new techniques so that we have the experience we desperately need in all of them to pick and choose the best in the next hectic three week campaign. All this needs equipment, staff and facilities that the party just does not have at present.

FRIGHTENING PROSPECT

That then is the picture as I see it after playing a small part in the production of the programmes. It is still a frightening prospect however much one believes in it, as I do. To have a great new weapon that you know little about and that can injure you as much as the enemy gives cause for serious thought.

But perhaps the truest lesson of all is the simplest. I believe that within a very few years the politician who has not mastered television will be as severely incapacitated as would be a politician who could not make a public speech to-day. Whether we like it or not TV is with us for keeps. We must make it serve us as surely as the pioneers made the leaflet and the soap box carry their message to the people of Britain.

★ Double Number ★

It was impossible to publish the "Labour Organiser in June.

It is hoped that readers will find this double number on the General Election interesting and helpful in their examination of the election and its lessons.

HOW TO GET PRESS PUBLICITY

AN essential feature of a Parliamentary election campaign is Press publicity. Good publicity in the local Press keeps the candidate's name before the public eye, stimulates interest in meetings, encourages active workers, and is good for the morale of the candidate!

Even 'bad' publicity is better than none; a hostile Press which advertises the candidate is to be preferred to indifference and silence. Since our efforts must be directed towards getting our supporters out, they must have our candidate's name in front of their eyes as often as possible, even if the particular paper is less than objective in its attitude. You cannot convert opponents on the strength of Press reports.

A Press and Publicity Officer is an official who can considerably influence the type of publicity which his candidate will receive. Unfortunately, many of those in the Labour Party who come in contact with local reporters conceive it to be their duty to erect a defensive barrier against the Press, and good Press relations are never established.

The following description of a successful publicity campaign may be of value to others. The constituency in question 'enjoys' a Conservative majority of over 20,000, is largely dormitory in character with no local industry, and supports three local papers.

At the inception of the campaign, the agent authorised the Press Officer to handle all Press and publicity material on his (the P.O.'s) own initiative, passing to him copies of all correspondence of a publicity value. The Candidate also informed the Press Officer of all correspondence of value.

Upon adoption of the Candidate, full biographical details and a photograph on glossy paper suitable for reproduction were sent to each local paper, and the local Press were invited to a Press conference at which were present the Candidate, the agent and the Press Officer. The letter of invitation gave directions for finding the address (this being necessary in a scattered constituency) as well as the offer of transport.

Typescript copies of the election address together with copies of the manifesto, *Forward with Labour*, were available, and formed the basis for the discussion. The Press Officer welcomed the reporters, learned their names (for future reference), and invited them to contact him with all their queries in future. They were given a complete list of all projected public meetings and supporting speakers.

Thereafter, the Press Officer attended every public meeting, met the reporters on their arrival, greeting them by name and ensured that they were seated to their satisfaction. It was found that some reporters required a table (*not* a rickety card table!), and others preferred to sit in the audience, watching for hecklers and audience reaction.

At the end of meetings in outlying villages late at night, the reporters were offered transport home, which was sometimes gratefully accepted. If time permitted, the speaker and chairman of the meeting were introduced to the reporter before the meeting began. The Candidate too, would exchange a friendly word with the reporters.

By the end of the campaign, the local reporters were on most cordial terms with the Press Officer, and a friendly chat often elicited items of interest arising from our opponent's meetings which might otherwise not have come to notice.

Possibly the form of news which the local Press are most anxious to receive is the 'human interest' story, the device known in some quarters as the 'gimmick', i.e., something indulged in purely for its publicity value.

To cover this aspect of Press publicity the Press Officer provided the local paper with a weekly release of items which in party circles would be considered too trivial to mention, but were eagerly received by the Press.

The following are typical examples: "An interesting feature of Miss — meetings has been the attendance of pupils from local schools who have been detailed, or have volunteered, to be Labour 'candidates' at the schools' mock election. Boys and girls have been seen energetically

ally making notes of points from Miss —'s speeches."

"Miss —, the Labour Candidate, accompanied by her agent, has extended her canvassing activities to cinema queues and bus queues."

An example of the 'gimmick' device, adopted solely for publicity value, was the following: "Miss —, the Labour Candidate, is having her car guarded by a Boxer guard dog, 'Butch', to avoid a repetition of the incident which occurred at the last General Election, when the Labour Candidate found that her car tyres were mysteriously deflated." The dog was borrowed from a party member, and accompanied the candidate to one or two meetings. Considerable success was achieved by this item, which even appeared in the National Press.

In the campaign under review, the Press Officer devoted his entire energies to the job, and his attendance at every meeting was of considerable value. Local parties and wards appreciated the attendance of a constituency officer who was able to help out, in an emergency, as chairman, speaker, or steward. If a meeting left a feeling of 'flatness', the candidate and the Press Officer held their own inquest on the reasons.

As a result of these activities, in conjunction with normal advertising methods, 15 meetings were held in a fortnight; the smallest indoor audience was 35 and the largest over 120, the average being about 50.

At the conclusion of the campaign, the following comment appeared in the local Press, in a paper not noted for Socialist sympathies: "The Labour Party's publicity officer, Mr. R.E.S., developed the happy—or unhappy—knack of finding the Tories in embarrassing situations. His publicity material to the Press was excellent, and in this the local Socialists and local Tories were poles apart."

In a personal letter, the Chief Reporter of another paper wrote: "I must congratulate you . . . on the splendid Press Relations which existed between the Party and the Press during the Election . . . I have reported several elections in this country, the U.S.A. and Canada, but have to say I have not before obtained such good co-operation as I have had from the local Labour Party."

In conclusion, remember that the reporters are doing their job, and respond to a helpful and friendly approach. They are not responsible for the politics of their employer, and are able, by judicious editing, to put a good complexion on what may seem an unsuccessful meeting. If you antagonise the Press, they can deprive you of much useful publicity, and they always have the last word!

R.E.S

MISS NICHOLLS

We regret to announce the death, at her home in Surrey, of Miss Daisy Nicholls, who had been employed at Labour Party headquarters from 1924 until two years ago, when ill-health compelled her to retire.

Miss Nicholls served under four National Agents, acting as Secretary to three of them.

NEW PARLIAMENT.

Now the Election is over, as democrats our interest is in the unfolding drama of the new Parliament elected to carry on the affairs of our country at home and abroad.

In the DAILY HERALD you will get descriptive and accurate reports of the Parliamentary scene with its clash of Party opinion, as well as news and authoritative comment on vital events in the world of Labour.



DAILY HERALD

LABOUR'S LIVELY PAPER

R.O. Decides Postal Vote

Attendance at a conference is not a qualification for a postal vote, some Returning Officers have decided, but a Scottish Court allowed the appeal of a clergyman attending the Church Assembly.

AS expected, the postal vote became a controversial issue immediately the date of the General Election was announced. It continued, so far as returning officers were concerned, until well after the last day for claims, as they had to deal with many late applications. It is now the subject of comment and speculation in local government journals.

FIRST SHOTS

The first shots in the battle of postal votes were fired in the House of Commons when instances were given of election agents seeking the help of doctors; of insufficient information at army camps regarding postal voting facilities for the Forces; and regarding the position of persons appointed as delegates to conferences.

The exchanges on these matters were lively, sometimes amusing, and to an extent informative and are therefore worth recalling.

Mrs. Barbara Castle, M.P., was able to produce evidence of what has been considered by some agents to be a fairly widespread practice—that of approaches being made to doctors for lists of patients who, for one reason or another, might claim to vote by post.

Though there was an attempt to confuse the issue, the Government spokesman did condemn this practice, and the British Medical Association stated that the supplying of such lists would be a breach of professional etiquette.

Apart from the question as to whether a doctor should divulge this information regarding his patients and the presupposition that he will collaborate further by signing the certificate on the application form, there is the fact that the ill and aged would be subjected to a special visit

by canvassers irrespective of the state of their health.

In one highly marginal constituency patients in a mental institution were approached and, it is believed, voted. This can be done, apparently, if the patient has "lucid moments" and, of course, is still registered to vote.

At the commencement of the election campaign there was reason to believe that some army camps had little or no information regarding facilities for postal voting and that the necessary form (F/Vote/35) was not readily available. On the matter being raised in the House of Commons, a signal was sent out by the War Office.

Some election agents, in an effort to help, applied to the electoral registration officer for a supply of forms. In some cases a small quantity was made available but in others the request was refused.

Electoral registration officers are not required to have large stocks of Service forms as this is the responsibility of the Service departments. In one locality, where the demand was heavy, it was suggested that a duplicated form be provided, as provision is made for "a form to the like effect" to be accepted.

SOME GRANTED

The claims of persons appointed as delegates to conferences had a mixed reception from electoral registration officers, in particular those attending the Old Age Pensioners' Conference. In some instances the application to vote by post was granted, in others it was refused on the grounds that it was not in connection with the general nature of the applicant's occupation, service or employment.

In reply to a question in the House regarding attendances at conferences, it was stated that the decision on a claim to vote as an absent voter rests with the electoral registration officer, subject to the right of appeal. Later the Home Secretary confirmed this by saying, "... it is within the discretion of the registration officer to grant permission or otherwise

and from his decision there is right of appeal”.

A most interesting case arose in Scotland regarding ministers attending the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Three ministers, having been unsuccessful in the application to vote by post, lodged an appeal. They stressed that they were under a duty to attend the Assembly and that it was accordingly part of the general nature of their occupation. In this instance the appeals failed, as it was held that the probable inability of the ministers to go to the polling stations was not due to the general nature of their occupation but the accidental and extrinsic circumstances that the general election coincided with a date upon which the Assembly of the Church of Scotland was convened.

In the Registration Appeal Court in Edinburgh, however, an appeal made by a minister was allowed, and in the written judgment the following ruling was given: “A minister of the Church of Scotland, when the date of an election coincides with a date of a meeting of the General Assembly to which he has been summoned and accordingly obliged to attend, is a person who comes within the terms of a provision of the Representation of the People Act, 1949, and will be entitled to a postal vote if he can satisfy the condition that he is unable or likely to be unable to go in person to the polling station.”

This appears to be a sensible ruling. We have always held the view that where attendances at conferences, training courses, etc. are directly connected with one's employment, service or occupation—for instance, trade union officers and staff—a genuine claim for a postal vote can be made. It has also been our view that attendance as a delegate at a conference or school is not sufficient ground for making a claim.

ON HOLIDAY

One of the most distressing tasks during the election was informing supporters due to be away on holiday that they could not vote by post. It was even more difficult when they stated that holiday rotas were fixed and they, as individuals, had no say in deciding the date.

From information received since the publication of the Absent Voters Lists, it would appear that some persons on holi-

day did in fact apply and some appear to have had their claims accepted.

As has been stated, the decision to grant an application rests with the electoral registration officer, subject to appeal by the applicant in the case of refusal. If, therefore, such applications are allowed, nothing can be done about it. There is no machinery whereby objections can be made (as in the case of registration) nor, so far as can be seen, does the Act or Regulations lay down penalties for false claims.

BLIND VOTERS

When one considers the comprehensive procedure governing the attendance of blind voters at a polling station, it is surprising to find there are no real safeguards for them when voting by post. At the moment it would appear that any person can mark the ballot paper of a blind person and is not even required to make a statement that the paper has been marked in accordance with the wishes of the voter.

With the possibility of increasing numbers of blind persons voting by post, this matter needs careful thought. The means whereby postal votes are obtained are often open to question, the possibilities of abuse in the case of blind persons are positively frightening.

As a result of the publicity and comment given to postal voting there is a possibility that the procedure will be reviewed. Factual information on anomalies and abuse that have arisen during the general election should be reported to us as soon as possible.

The columns of the *Labour Organiser* are open to anyone with something interesting and informative to say on those specific subjects in which the magazine deals.

Many readers may not realise that the new idea which they have conceived and put into successful practice will most likely be of value to their counterparts in other places. Therefore, if you have developed something new, either on an old problem or on a new one, write it up and let the rest of the Labour movement have the benefit of your knowledge.

Don't forget the deadline for the receipt of all contributions is the 15th of the month for publication the following month.

DID YOU HAVE DAILY RETURNS?

asks Margaret Fox

DURING the General Election campaign, it was disquieting to find that in some areas, including marginal constituencies, no daily Canvass Returns were available at the Central Committee Rooms. There were always assurances that canvassing was going on, but to what extent and where was not known with any certainty.

To be without this information suggests to me that the campaign is running the Election Agent rather than the agent actively directing the campaign.

I appreciate that in many constituencies it takes us all our time to get the basic work of the election carried out. But in the marginal constituencies, up-to-date knowledge of precisely what is happening can make the difference between losing and winning.

Daily Canvass Returns are a necessity for a number of reasons. Firstly, a daily Return from a local Committee Room does show that canvassing is being carried out. This is by no means a minor point. Many an 'inquest' has revealed that everyone thought 'old Bill' was organising the canvass, whereas 'old Bill' started overtime that week and gave the cards to 'Charlie', who was waiting for someone to tell him to make a start.

TOTAL RETURN

Secondly, the total Canvass Return for the constituency shows the Election Agent the rate of progress day by day. If he is working on a 100 per cent marked register (which in a marginal area he should be), and the calls are being made on doubtfuls and Labour supporters only, the agent can tell *early* in the campaign if the ground is being covered fast enough to achieve a complete canvass by Polling Day,

Thirteen canvassing days means that at least 10 per cent of doubtfuls and Labour supporters have to be accounted for each day, and three days are then in hand for the Sunday morning when it snowed, the night we had the big meeting and everyone wanted to be a steward, and the day

we had to deliver the Election Specials.

Armed with the canvass figures the agent quickly knows the Polling Districts where progress is too slow and he can prove to these areas the need for getting more canvassers on the job early in the campaign rather than waiting for a panic to develop over the last week-end.

If a strong Labour area is lagging behind, it may be desirable for workers to be transferred, but this type of work—which requires considerable planning—can only be done effectively if the agent knows the true position in each Polling District.

A STRUGGLE

It is usually a struggle to secure the final canvass figures, but it is important to do so because these figures should be used as a guide for the allocation of cars and deployment of workers on Polling Day.

Having proved my point, I hope, that daily Canvass Returns are essential, let us consider how they are to be obtained. Invariably the only sure method is to go and fetch them.

The prospect of organising a visit every day to every Committee Room may appear alarming. However, with a little planning *well in advance* of election periods this can be achieved in a compact town constituency. In a rural area this scheme has to be modified by the distant Committee Room organisers using the post to send in their Canvass Returns, visits being made from the Central Committee Rooms say, twice a week.

Transport is essential and probably two vehicles will be required to cover the constituency in one evening. However, these vehicles need not be the precious cars wanted to transport the candidate and speakers. A two-seater car, a van, or even a motor-bike and sidecar are quite suitable.

For the collection to be made speedily the local organisers have to appreciate that the Canvass Return must be ready enclosed in a sealed envelope and left in a prominent place in the local Committee Room.

Time must be taken before the election to teach local organisers how to fill in

Canvass Return—the form is by no means self explanatory, particularly so far as the running totals after the first return are concerned.

With all the Returns back at the Central Committee Rooms, the figures for the whole constituency can be compiled, and the Election Agent can study them and plan his campaign accordingly.

There are a number of useful by-products to this daily visit to local Committee Rooms. Vehicles should always carry spare supplies of window bills, posters, envelopes, etc. Notebooks should be carried by the drivers and all requests and observations from local organisers noted for the attention of the agent. A quick look round the local Committee Room may reveal that the Election Specials delivered yesterday are still on the sideboard and that assistance is required to deal with them.

Small complaints can be dealt with before they grow into mighty rows and a breakdown in organisation can be remedied before it does any damage.

DELIVERY ROUND

The Canvass Collection Round can be used as a Delivery Round also. Meeting handbills, lists of postal voters, leaflets, check pads, knocking-up leaflets are assured of prompt delivery to the local Committee Rooms. Special instructions from the Election Agent can reach every local organiser within a few hours—and this is particularly important where there are local Committee Rooms without a telephone.

Finally, this regular visit from the Central Committee Rooms is good for the morale of the workers. Being in regular contact with the Election Agent reassures them that they are not being left to fight the Tories in isolation, but that they are part of a lively and widespread organisation, engaged in a campaign which is being well directed because the Election Agent has the information which he needs to do a good job.

Situations Vacant

WOOD GREEN C.L.P.—Applications are invited for the post of full-time Secretary/Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. Applicant must be young, energetic and with initiative. Application forms available from Mr. W. F. Rainbird, Stirling House, 4 Stuart Crescent, Wood Green, N.22, to whom they should be returned not later than Saturday, 30th July, 1955.

Machine Addressing

by A. F. CLARKE

IN common with many constituencies we had to face a General Election, following as it did on the Municipal and County elections, with a team of workers who were beginning to show signs of fatigue.

To ease the amount of work needed to complete the job of addressing and filling election envelopes, and to speed operations following a late start, due to the preceding two elections and to a change of candidate after the announcement of the General Election, I attempted, with success, to mechanise the job.

Election envelopes were partially addressed with Streets, Districts, and Towns, at the rate of 1,000 per hour by passing them automatically through a Gestetner 260 duplicator, which also counted the required number for each street.

This took the monotony out of addressing, which was surprisingly quickly completed by writers who only had to add the elector's name and the house number.

Stencils were cut for all streets with over 40 electors. To help in cross checking, the polling district letters were added in the left-hand corner. Envelopes with a side seam and a square cut flap fed best into the machine. The advantage over the addressing machine method used by some colleagues is that the envelopes are fed automatically, at a high rate, and are counted. Gestetner do not list this job amongst the uses of their machine but I found it 100 per cent successful. I have now cleaned the stencils and preserved them for future use.

The second aid was the use of a 'Foldmaster' electric folding machine. This, in fact, is a good investment, the initial cost of £31 being largely offset by having the election addresses delivered flat.

This machine was adjusted to fold twice, to the size needed for the envelopes. It maintained a high rate of folding (although not as high as advertised) and kept 30 people fully occupied filling. In 24 working hours the job of filling 48,000 envelopes was completed.

ELECTION PRINTING STANDARD MAINTAINED

DONALD CHAPMAN
has been Labour's M.P. since 1951.
He comes of a Yorkshire mining
family, was a scholar at Cambridge
University, and has been a member of
the Labour Party since 1930. He has
been a City councillor, the secretary
of the General Federation of Labour's
removal of slums campaign, and is a writer
on economics and social issues.

IN NORTHFIELD

He has been active on hundreds of
committees, and has been a member of
the Labour Party since 1930. He has
been a City councillor, the secretary
of the General Federation of Labour's
removal of slums campaign, and is a writer
on economics and social issues.

IN PARLIAMENT

He has a high reputation as a speaker
on economic and social matters. At
31 years of age he has been a member
of the House of Commons since 1951.
He has been a member of the Labour
Party since 1930. He has been a City
councillor, the secretary of the General
Federation of Labour's removal of
slums campaign, and is a writer on
economics and social issues.

EVEN were we able to agree that radio, and the new media of TV are now the most important means of putting over a party's policy, they still do not accomplish every Agent's ambition: **TO SELL HIS CANDIDATE TO THE PEOPLE OF HIS LOCALITY.**

The election address retains its traditional supremacy. It remains the easiest, and with care, the most effective way of introducing a candidate and his views to the electorate. The address and other literature in fact becomes the candidate's and Party's representative within the home and, as such, the choice of paper, cleanliness of layout and quality of print call for much careful deliberation.

If people cannot be induced to attend his public meetings, then he must be enabled to bring his personality and message into the homes of the voters — through the election address.

How did Labour fare with its propaganda in this General Election? All things considered the standard was better than might have been feared in many quarters. Many Agents had good ideas which got lost in indifferent layouts, many more had no fresh ideas but with a neat layout and print quality put a bright face on it and hid any dullness that would have been apparent. A pleasing number combined well designed literature with well written and appealing text matter of readily acceptable lengths.

There were, however, still far too many addresses containing long-winded messages set out in small type sizes, inviting immediate relegation to someone's wastepaper basket. Also many addresses had much reading matter set in wide columns which gave a 'booky' appearance to the text. People become accustomed to the ease of narrow columns and short paragraphs in newspapers and soon lose interest in reading wide columns where the eyes tire quickly with the backward and forward travel. This is often aggravated further by vertical folds through the columns. Election literature

Which Road for Britain?

There are two main roads to take in the election address. The first is the road of the candidate's personal experience and the second is the road of the candidate's political beliefs. The first road is the easier of the two, for it is based on the candidate's own life and work, and it is therefore more likely to be accepted by the electorate. The second road is the more difficult, for it is based on the candidate's political beliefs, and it is therefore more likely to be rejected by the electorate. The candidate must choose between these two roads, and he must choose wisely. The first road is the road of the candidate's personal experience, and the second is the road of the candidate's political beliefs. The candidate must choose between these two roads, and he must choose wisely.

1. Good paper, well written with an extremely pleasant change from the run-of-the-mill. Margins inside rather cramped and making the text look rather wordy.
2. Cover and one of the inner pages with candidate; an excellent job in every way—arresting, good layout and clever use of folds. A high professional standard.
3. Introductory leaflet following same style and thus building all literature up into a unified campaign.
4. Best example of choice-and-cutting-of-the-candidate's-photograph to make a friendly cover to leaflet, inviting the recipient's further interest.
5. The best seen of this popular presentation. Direct and very much to the point. Margins inside are almost non-existent, however!
6. Inner page of an address showing similar use of photograph and colour, cover being reserved for a more striking approach.
7. The personal touch; an informal and creditable address, perhaps a little too long (three pages), but refreshing and economical.
8. Everything-at-a-glance. The traditional demands of candidate and agent composed into a bold, simple layout with good use of colour.
9. One of many examples showing use of "AMMUNITION" to make a forceful address with minimal difficulties.
10. (Adjoining) Excellent example of clear layout inside address, with good margins.

tends to be serious heavy reading; the least we can do is make it visually easy.

In one London constituency an address designed to be folded in one place had to go out folded in another to avoid wrecking the effect of the five-point policy panels. A further loss in this address was the fact that much of the unused space on the cover which could have been used to display the candidate's name far more prominently (it was nowhere displayed boldly), was left in unrelieved half-tone grey, thus leaving the candidate to slide off the lower edges.

The styles of addresses varied widely—from the 'song sheet' form of Roy Thomas, to the 'hotel hand-out' approach of 'Challenge To Dorset'.

The use of folds and paper sizes in the latter provided a pleasant departure from the usual run of addresses, and with a similarly enterprising cover would have been outstanding.

In an otherwise interesting and novel layout, it is disappointing that Bill Hilton's disembodied head should 'float' above the river to Westminster. Slightly varied placing of the two photographs would have made head and shoulders possible with no loss of pictorial content.

The use of tinted paper in West Fife made for a freshness which was partly matched in the layout. Ian Mikardo

maintained his forthright high standard, an example followed with good effect by a couple of other constituencies.

Good window bills were few and far between unfortunately! The display of window bills by supporters has greater significance and is more heartening than most other forms of publicity and any extra time devoted to having them well designed and attractive is more than repayed, particularly where it incorporates a definite style which follows through with the campaign.

The usual objections of size for display purposes can be overcome to a large degree where the bill in shape, colour or styling makes a readily recognised symbol. Many agents realise this but get no further than printing on a square of paper diamond-wise.

The potential of rosette or pennant shape bills seem little considered. Much obviously depends on the candidates name.

Where crimson was used in bills and literature in place of the more orthodox flame or scarlet red, it seemed to give a cleaner and stronger contrast. Some of the greens used in the North—particularly in Bill Hamilton's address were extremely pleasant this time.

To the
Editor

Mrs. WEBB'S DIARY

SIR.—Your reviewer, A.L.W., makes a great deal out of a single comment from Beatrice Webb's private diary; if he had read more fully in the published volumes he would have seen criticisms of many other groups of persons besides Labour agents. In any event, his own comment is untrue: the Fabians helped in the foundation of the Labour Party, and the reorganisation of 1918, which turned it into a full political party, with a Socialist programme, was largely due to the happy and hard-working collaboration of two men, Arthur Henderson and Sidney Webb—both Fabians.

MARGARET COLE.

A.L.W. writes:

Mrs. Webb may have criticised other groups of persons besides Labour agents, though surely to describe Labour agents as "old men, unkempt men, half edu-

cated men—an inferior brand of Trade Union branch official—with no alertness and little organising ability" is not criticism, but is to regard with contempt a body of men who, within five years, helped to make the Labour Party His Majesty's Opposition.

My comment was made not only in the knowledge of this attitude of mind of a leading Fabian, but also in the knowledge that the Fabians stood aloof from Keir Hardie's movement to establish an independent Labour Party because they believed mainly in influencing the older parties to accept Socialist measures piecemeal.

I have no wish to deny the Fabians' contribution after it became apparent that Hardie's movement was succeeding, nor Sidney Webb's distinguished service to the Labour Party especially after he joined its National Executive Committee in 1916.

POSTAL VOTE NO NIGHTMARE !

by A. CLARE

FELLOW-AGENTS! Do you have nightmares? Do you count Tory postal votes in your sleep? Are you haunted by the spectre of those postal ballot boxes being opened at the Count? If so, drink Horl. . . . No! No! Let's look for the *real* cure.

How many of us, at election times, swamp the constituency with RPF cards and think we've organised the postal vote? How many of us are shocked and dismayed when the Absent Voters' Lists arrive and contain hundreds of Tory supporters to every dozen of ours?

Let's face it: it is virtually impossible to get our active members to undertake a proper postal vote canvass *before* the election campaign and to see that the applications are completed and submitted to the Registration Officer in time.

Isn't it an old maxim among Agents that if you want a job done properly you do it yourself? I am convinced that to organise the postal vote successfully it must be centralised to a large degree and that it must be a continuous process, not telescoped into the fortnight prior to the closing date.

If you could ask each member individually if he knows anyone in his road or village who *might* need a postal vote, he would, with a little prodding, think of several—the railwayman next door, the old dear with rheumatism up the road, and the young couple opposite who recently moved away.

The Approach

This, then, must be the approach. You ask ALL your members, trade unionists, village contacts, and anyone you can think of to tell you the names and addresses of people they know who MIGHT want a postal vote.

Send them all a simple slip on which to write this down under the headings of (a) sickness, (b) removal, and (c) working away. Emphasise in the covering letter that you don't want them to do any *work*—that interests them right away. Tell them all what they must do is to jot down the names of supporters who

MIGHT qualify for a postal vote, and that you will do the rest.

Make their job even easier by enclosing a reply-paid envelope. And ask local secretaries to prod them to return the slips. If you are lucky, you will get 10 per cent of these back, and, providing you have sent out enough this will produce a fairly good coverage. Once you've the names you can start work!

Initial Work

Some initial duplicating work is necessary. You will require:

1. A supply of Business Reply Envelopes. (Take out a G.P.O. Licence—envelopes used cost only a halfpenny more than the ordinary post.)
2. Duplicated letters addressed to the three main categories of applicants suggesting that as it may be difficult for them to vote in person at the forthcoming (or future) election you suggest that they should take advantage of the postal vote facilities, etc.
3. A supply of RPF 7 and RPF 8 application cards.
4. A small slip to send to sickness or disability cases on which they indicate the name and town of their doctor. (You get the correct address and initials from the phone book.)
5. A simple record card, which can be duplicated on different coloured card for the various categories, with space for the following information:
 - (a) Applicant's register letter and electoral number.
 - (b) Category (Disability, removal or working away).
 - (c) Serial number (for purpose of your records).
 - (d) Name and register address of applicant.
 - (e) Current address (for removals).
 - (f) Name of doctor (for disability cases).
 - (g) Period of qualification (if known).
 - (h) Occupation (for working-away cases).

At the bottom of the record card allow space to record with a date-stamp the date (a) form sent, (b) returned, (c) sent to doctor, (d) submitted to R.O. and (e)

allowed.

As the names and addresses come in from your members, deal with them as follows:—

1. Make out a record card, inserting electoral number and all other information as may be available.
2. Tick off in your bound register. This is necessary as there is bound to be some duplication of names as they come in from varying sources.
3. Fill in the appropriate RPF card and put a pencil cross against the space for applicant's signature.
4. Pencil in a corner of the RPF card your record reference number. This will enable you to trace it quickly when it is returned.
5. Send the application card off to the applicant, along with a reply-paid envelope and the appropriate duplicated letter which tells them that all they must do is to sign the card where indicated and return to you.

When the cards come back:

1. Mark the record card with the date-stamp under the heading 'Returned', tracing it quickly by the pencilled reference number. In all cases, other than disability, it will be ready for submission to the R.O.
2. In medical cases, send the card on to the doctor with an appropriate duplicated letter and a prepaid envelope, asking for his co-operation in signing.

If an application card does not return after a week or so, send a 'chaser' letter. In cases where supporters find they will be able to vote in person, they will use the prepaid envelope to let you know.

Complete Control

In this way, the agent has complete control of the issue of RPF application cards. No cards 'float' around local parties or wards. Every active member knows that if he hears of someone wanting a postal vote he phones or sends a slip to the agent.

The record cards are of tremendous value. When the Absent Voters' Lists are issued you can quickly tick off all those who are supporters and arrange to send them suitable literature and the leaflet 'How to vote by post' in advance of their receiving their postal ballot papers.

After the election, you will know all your supporters who will remain permanently on the Lists, and where medical certificates have been issued for limited

periods they can be followed up for renewal.

You can build upon this between elections, repeating the above procedure every time you come across any supporter who may be unable to vote in person at a future election.

It sounds costly? It seems a lot of work? But if it should take five minutes to deal with each application and cost up to sixpence for each, it is well worth while, especially if it produces 500 more postal votes than you would otherwise have obtained. In actual time this might total 40 or 50 hours and in money only about £15.

I have no doubt that many agents already adopt this method. I tried it for the first time in the recent Election—a little late, it's true—and got in 250 extra postal votes that I would otherwise have missed.

It is particularly valuable in rural constituencies where village contacts are in a unique position to know almost everyone in the community and can produce lists of almost every Labour supporter who may require a postal vote.

The secret of success, I believe, is in the emphasising of the MIGHT WANT A POSTAL VOTE and in repeating that the actual work will be done from the Party Office. Perhaps it is that some members get a certain delight from passing on work to the agent . . . ?

New Agents

THE National Executive Committee has recently approved the following appointments:

MR. H. ROGERS — as Secretary-Agent for Wycombe. Mr. Rogers has been a full-time agent for six years, serving at Chislehurst and North Lewisham. He is 50.

MR. T. A. GRANT — as Secretary-Agent for Carlisle. Mr. Grant, who is 32, has held various offices in the Party over the past few years.

MR. R. FOULKES — as Secretary-Agent for Huyton. Mr. Foulkes has held various offices in the Party over the past years and acted as Election Agent both in the 1950 and 1955 elections. He is 46.

MR. H. SHINDLER — as Secretary-Agent for Kingston. Mr. Shindler, who is 33, was full-time agent at Wimbledon until the recent redistribution.

RECRUIT ELECTION STAFF NOW!

says Arthur Johnson

THERE is one lesson that the recent election campaign has taught us, a lesson from which we must learn. This is that future elections will be won, in the main, by the party with the best machine. Now machines must be manned by active workers and there is a general and widespread complaint of shortage of workers.

This is not a new problem facing organisers, but what has been done about it?

It is no use complaining that members do not report to committee rooms if they are not informed of the whereabouts of these rooms and if their assistance is not requested. No use moaning about the lack of canvassers, writers, distributors, knockers up, cars, etc., or of a general lack of troops from which to form an army. Agents and secretaries must recruit their troops and recruit them well before the campaign battle opens, and, much more important, some training must be given to the troops.

In 1937, I was faced with this very problem. Where was I to obtain the assistance so vitally necessary to conduct the routine organising work of my Constituency Labour Party all the year round and to win election campaigns? Much thought was given to this problem. It was agreed by all concerned that it would serve no useful purpose to appeal once again to those in attendance at ward meetings; they were already overloaded with work.

Broaden appeal

No, we decided to broaden the appeal and take into our confidence the whole membership of the party and seek their help.

A small booklet was prepared in duplicated form, under the title of 'An Explanation of Party and Election Work', containing a detailed outline of the jobs that have to be undertaken if a successful political machine is to function. All these jobs were fully explained and, after

reading the booklet, the members were invited to fill in a form, which was enclosed, indicating how best they could assist the party.

The booklet was sent by post to every member, with a covering letter saying that a party or ward official would call in a few days and discuss with them the contents.

The success of these visits was beyond all expectations. It showed conclusively that amongst the party membership, especially amongst those who for many reasons did not or were unable to attend ward meetings, there was a wealth of activity just waiting to be recruited.

Good result

Result, more collectors than were immediately necessary; lists prepared of those willing to assist in all manner of jobs, from showing window bills for social functions and at election times, to undertaking even the most menial of tasks, such as sweeping and tidying up committee rooms.

Constituency agents and secretaries who followed this example would find it well worth while. It would be a great advantage if the necessary work was put in hand immediately and a 'Survey of Work Potential' undertaken. It should be realised that it is useless to use ward meetings as recruiting grounds, it is absolutely necessary to get among the membership. After all, what does the party official know of his members? Only the number of paying members and where they live. Yet, if asked, the average member often will respond and be happy to do some small job in the party. Tell the members of your problem and ask for their assistance.

During recent months I have accompanied local officials on visits to members in more than one constituency, and these officials have now become devotees to this system. Don't just sit back and moan about shortages, and much more important, don't continue to overload those already working. Make an endeavour to spread the load by going out and enlisting the aid of other members.

GOOD WORK WAS DONE

I VISITED a number of constituencies, mostly marginal, during the course of the General Election campaign. Apart from one or two places, there was no marked enthusiasm, but never did I see signs of despondency which would have been obvious had there been any foundation for the confidential predictions of the polsters, that a great landslide was on the way. Unfortunately, it must be admitted that everywhere we were short of workers, but those who did put their hands to the plough were certainly not looking backwards.

I would like to recount some of my experiences.

In London and Middlesex I visited a number of constituencies. I was particularly interested in the ability of Acton, a highly marginal seat, to work from the word 'go' at polling district level. An organisation capable of carrying out the detailed work of a campaign at this level has the best chance of knowing the electorate well and pulling out our full strength. Acton faced a stiff job, but the orderliness of the campaign and the machinery which functioned between elections paid good dividends on May 26th.

Barons Court is also worthy of a special mention. There was a refreshing briskness about this campaign, and as far as one could see from observations at the committee rooms, nothing was left to chance.

South Battersea could have done with much more help in some of its marginal Wards, but the splendid group of workers

led by an able agent and an enthusiastic candidate deserved victory which, on this occasion, was denied them.

Like Acton, Wandsworth, Clapham, is to be commended for its ability to work a large part of the constituency at polling district level. Throughout the campaign I have no doubt that this type of structure contributed considerably to the return of an old stalwart, Charles Gibson, to the House of Commons, though it was a close shave.

Merseyside offered interesting experi-

by Sara Barker

ences. On paper Birkenhead looked safe enough, but rehousing was considered to have moved several thousand good Labour supporters from this constituency. I was particularly impressed with the local broadsheet.

Bootle did a good job. It was clear that the agent's attention to detail and his drive had an effective impact on the workers. This was a tricky fight and was won through the efficient planning of the campaign.

Then there was Bessie Braddock's original poster:—

When YOU needed BESSIE she was THERE !

Now BESSIE needs YOU—be There on THURSDAY, MAY 26th, 1955, to VOTE LABOUR.

West Derby also deserves honourable mention. We did not win this marginal seat but that was not the fault of those in charge of the campaign.

The agent in Walton is to be commended for the very fine posters which she designed. The publicity was some of the best in the country.

The Huyton campaign resulted in a good victory. I feel that Harold Wilson's Election Address played an important part in the campaign. It dealt clearly with important aspects of Party policy and economic position of the country, but it also reminded electors of a very large number of constituency problems dealt with on the floor of the House of Commons by their Member of Parliament which resulted in a considerable number of benefits and services for the people of Huyton.

This was an excellent line to take and one which appeals to the elector who is

inclined to take the view that if the Member of Parliament can do the jobs which are near at hand he can be relied on to tackle wider problems.

Two of the most interesting visits were in Newark and Grantham.

George Deer, an old Socialist stalwart, defended Newark, a seat very adversely affected by redistribution. It would not be surprising if this constituency were regarded as a possible win by our opponents. From reports received at the workers' meetings, which I addressed, it was clear that the mining areas of the constituency were prepared to do their job, perhaps not in strict accord with the book, but in a manner which was going to achieve the desired results. Furthermore, the women in these areas transferred help to some of the rural villages.

It was, however, the Newark local committee rooms which would have delighted the heart of any organiser. The machinery was excellent, and what was even more inspiring was the sight of a splendid team of young men and women, guided by a youthful and dynamic sub-agent, Newark recognised that it had a particular responsibility in this scattered constituency and must increase the Labour vote to make up for that lost by redistribution. The target figure had been set and it was well on its way to being realised when I was there some days before polling day, and judging from the grand result Newark achieved its target, or exceeded it.

The greatest enthusiasm I encountered was in Grantham. If ever a candidate, agent and helpers deserved victory it was that Grantham team. Like Rugby work had been done in this constituency for some time and there had been considerable development in the many villages.

Maybe it was too much to expect to wipe out a Tory majority of 2,000, and convert a Liberal vote of 8,000 at one swoop. Nevertheless, it is to Woodrow Wyatt, his splendid agent and many helpers, that Grantham has been brought into the marginal class at last. It only needs another push to achieve victory.

There was a marked difference in the degree of detailed work being done during the election campaign in those constituencies where a good machine was already in existence, compared with the constituencies which had been inclined to adopt an indifferent attitude towards the value of organisation.

Candidate Refused Injunction

AN injunction was sought by the Labour candidate in Hitchin at the General Election to restrain the writer and publisher of a 'mock' ration book, and a grocery shop manager who had handed out some copies, from printing, publishing and distributing the document. Our candidate claimed that they had entered into a 'tortuous conspiracy' to issue the cards and that they incited electors to incur unauthorised expenditure contrary to Section 63 of the Representation of the People Act, 1949.

The card contained rhyming text on the second and third pages together with the price; the fourth page included the following words: 'If you want Communism you will vote Labour. If not, you can help kill it with ridicule by putting a few of these cards around before the election.'

The facts disclosed, it was claimed, that the circulation of these cards had spread over the country, out of control of election agents, and the ever-widening circle of distribution was the result of unlawful incitement.

The Conservative election agent submitted an affidavit which stated that he had purchased 1,000 copies and the cost would be included in his return of election expenses. He had given 40 to the grocery shop manager.

In giving his decision, the Judge stated that Section 63 said in effect that nobody should incur election expenses save authorised election agents. It had been said that the document contained an invitation to the public to commit that offence by sending money for the cards.

The Act raised interesting and quite difficult points as to its construction. If the action ever came to trial no doubt these matters would have to be considered. 'Here,' he stated, 'there is no evidence whatever that any persons have applied to the printer of these documents. Supplies have been legitimately procured by the election agent, who will quite properly disclose that expense in his election account.'

The injunction was refused and the action withdrawn.

MEETINGS WERE WORTHWHILE

by Don Alger

THERE have been many hasty generalisations about the public meetings which were held during the General Election campaign. Because the circumstances in the constituencies varied so much, few of these generalisations can be accepted without qualification. It has been said, for instance, that the majority of meetings were poorly attended. In some constituencies this was true. In others it emphatically was not.

It has also been said that since the radio and television propaganda gave the electors all the information they desired, public meetings were superfluous. That this was untrue was proved not so much by the demand for public meetings which was hardly, if at all, smaller than in 1951, as by the fact that many meetings were highly successful.

How varied the practice was can be seen from the fact that in one urban constituency the candidate held over 40 meetings, all of which were well-attended, whereas in another of the same type the candidate held only five which were also well-attended.

Partly, perhaps, because in the early stages of the campaign, our constituency parties were concerned with the local government elections, and partly because of the general apathy among the electors, the early meetings were rarely successful.

This was true even in some cases in which the speaker was a national celebrity. We know that in this matter both the major political parties suffered. Later in the campaign the picture changed and many crowded and enthusiastic meetings were held.

It should be added that often the impression of public meetings given by the national Press was misleading. In one case which came to our notice it appeared from certain newspapers that a meeting addressed by a famous speaker was a trivial event with a small audience and a complete lack of enthusiasm.

In fact over 700 people were present and

manifestly delighted by the speaker.

As might be expected, local Press reports gave far better and fuller accounts of meetings, often conveying accurately the spirit of the audiences as well as the substance of the speeches.

Many constituency parties were fortunate enough to have the services of a Meetings Officer, acting under the general direction of the Election Agent. These Meetings Officers did invaluable work; they deserve our gratitude for the skill and patience they brought to the task of making efficient arrangements and particularly of smoothing the way for speakers who travelled long distances or were obliged to address a number of meetings under exacting conditions of haste and in places entirely strange to them.

In a number of constituencies, however, the shortage of skilled election workers was such that the agent himself was obliged to add the organisation of meetings to his many other personal duties.

There are some lessons to be learnt, and it will be useful to deal with these under a few simple headings:

ADVERTISEMENTS. Whatever the means chosen, they should be such as to ensure that the whole of the electors in the district concerned are aware of the date, time, place and speaker of the meeting. The principle that unless a meeting can be advertised in this way it should not be held at all is more important during a General Election campaign than in ordinary times.

The advertisement should be timely; not a few hours before the meeting. Election workers cannot afford to waste time on abortive meetings. Moreover, the meetings cost precious money.

DIRECTIONS FOR REACHING MEETINGS. In many places meetings are held in the assembly halls or classrooms of large schools. Electors and speakers should not (as in some cases to which our attention has been drawn) be expected to have to find their way unaided to the correct places in such buildings. This is a small point which is nevertheless worthy of attention in order that incon-

venience may be avoided.

Headquarters produced for the election campaign two plain posters (one red, one yellow) bearing in bold letters the words **LABOUR PARTY MEETING**. On posters of this kind arrows can easily be drawn, pointing the route to the meeting.

On the subject of directions generally, it is worth repeating that the information sent to speakers should include clear details of the best way of reaching meetings. Where a speaker who travelled in his own car addressed several meetings in a constituency on a particular evening, some agents thoughtfully provided a pilot. This is a practice which saves time and inconvenience. It was greatly appreciated by several speakers.

THE AGENDA. Where two or more speakers are booked to address a meeting, it is important that they should know in advance the subjects with which they are to deal. Rather too often during the recent campaign speakers were left without guidance on this point and found their careful preparations of no avail because their ground had been covered by other speakers. In making a hasty impromptu speech these speakers could not be expected to create a really good impression.

Both the subject and the time to be allotted to it should be notified to the speaker well before the meeting. Occasionally a speaker found himself asked on arrival at a meeting to deal with a subject with which he was unfamiliar or which was unsuitable for an election meeting.

Merely because it was known that he was an expert upon it, one speaker was shocked to find himself requested to deal with a highly-technical subject which was entirely irrelevant. The request may have been made out of courtesy to the speaker, but a little prior consultation with him would have prevented an unsuitable arrangement.

All this paragraph can be condensed into a simple rule—that all concerned (and especially the chairman and speakers) should have in good time copies of a carefully prepared agenda. Thus personal embarrassment, duplication of speeches, and the spread of a sense of weakness and confusion would be avoided. As one speaker has reminded us, we are confessedly “a Party of planners”. We must plan well.

SUPERFLUOUS SPEAKERS. The temptation to have too many speakers at a meeting should be resisted. Five and even six have sometimes appeared. Two, or at most three, are sufficient for all ordinary meetings. If there are more than this there is a danger that no speaker will have time properly to state his case. The impression left on the audience will be vague and fleeting.

QUESTIONS. It has rightly become the custom for candidates only to answer questions. The custom is sound because it is the candidate who is responsible to the electors, who have the right to know his line on the questions they ask. Moreover, visiting speakers cannot be expected to know local implications of questions as the candidate should know them.

Because questions afford the candidate a special opportunity of settling the doubts of the electors, some candidates prefer question-and-answer meetings instead of meetings of the ordinary type.

If the candidate is equal to the task it would seem that the best platform campaign would consist of a judicious mixture of meetings of both kinds. The marginal voter should always be kept in mind; he is the person whose questions should be encouraged.

OPEN-AIR MEETINGS. In the recent campaign many constituency parties were fortunate in being able to hold a number of meetings out-of-doors. Although experience in this matter varied considerably, it is clear that wherever good arrangements were made, these meetings were (weather permitting!) successful. Such meetings have the attraction of informality; speakers and audiences usually enter more easily into the spirit of the event than they do indoors.

It is, however, important to observe the necessary courtesies. The site chosen for a meeting should not only be convenient but such as not to cause offence to any group of people. The permission of the police and other interested parties should always be obtained beforehand.

As an instance of what courtesy can do, one might mention a meeting which it was necessary to hold beside a fairground. The owners of the fair suspended their musical performance and the speaker reciprocated by suggesting that at the close of the meeting the audience should enjoy themselves at the fair.

Success Stories

WE GAIN S.W. NORFOLK

by Sidney Dye, M.P.

MOST people seem to think the count was the most trying experience. But I did not find it any more exacting than any other phase of this needle contest.

The County Council elections had not gone any better with us than in most other constituencies: two Labour losses, held two seats and repulsed in our attack on four other seats. Not that we did not work hard, but too few workers to overcome the prevailing apathy.

Those county elections, coupled with the rush of spring work on the farm sapped my energy almost to the last drop. So I decided to make for Bournemouth and a week's rest in the sun. On the way there, the Prime Minister used the B.B.C. to announce to the nation that a General Election would take place on May 26th. I did not hear it, nor read about it, until late on Saturday evening and then decided to return home ready for the fray on Monday.

My agent had been busy in an endeavour to book up halls for meetings for eve-of-poll, only to find that the Tories, as usual, had forestalled us. However, in each of the three small towns halls were booked for May 23rd, 24th, and 25th. But the election envelopes, although ordered two months earlier, had not arrived, and the best the suppliers could offer was three weeks for delivery.

Better to cancel the order and have a form of address that could be posted without an envelope, I thought. That would mean immediate printing and the only topic for discussion seemed to be the budget. It did occur to me the budget would wear a thin look by the time the address reached the electors. However, at the end of the week the envelopes arrived and all the work on the first draft of the election address was scrapped.

I decided on mainly an open-air campaign, nearly the whole of which was to be packed into those nine days, May 16th to 21st, and 23rd to 25th. Saturday, May

7th, eight days after our Tory opponent was fixed for the adoption meeting.

Then the shadow fell. Our agent, Bryan Barnard, had not been too well and would sleep for only about two hours each night. So Helen, my daughter, was driving him about the constituency. At noon that day they were involved in a motor accident: that, unfortunately, ended fatally for the pillion passenger on a motor-cycle.

Both our folks were uninjured, but suffered severely from shock, although in no way to blame. Their condition needed rest and quiet, so no meeting for them that day. Fortunately Geoffrey de Freitas had been booked for May 7th and he kept the engagement and gave us a good send-off.

But the really urgent problem up to May 12th, into which every willing worker was pressed, was the postal voter. Every village, and we have 120, had to be visited, and in all some 500 were got on to the P.V. list.

Next, we had to tackle the election address. It was decided, as a measure of economy and to save writing, to address one envelope and send one address only to each household. At no time did I hear any adverse criticism of this decision. In fact, people seemed to wonder why it had not been the practice earlier.

I made several attempts to draft the address and did not like the results. Then I came to the conclusion that, having fought four elections and lived in the middle of the constituency for 23 years, most electors would know me and what I stood for.

My remarks should therefore be directed to the young voters and newcomers to the constituency. Tell them in simple, clear language the essential things which the Labour Party stands for, contrast them with the general Tory attitude and give them an outline of my public activities over the past 30 years. In particular the glaring weaknesses in the Tory record on agriculture were pinpointed, and Labour's policy clearly explained.

All our election addresses were posted on the 18th and 19th May.

In planning the campaign in which the Tories had a lead of eight days, I decided to follow them in every place, except, of course, the last two days. Because of the shortage of local speakers it was thought a good thing to try both TV and the broadcast Labour speeches at our meetings.

And yes, they were a success. The opening TV appearance of Mr. and Mrs. Attlee coincided with a visit by Hugh Gaitskell at Downham Market, and drew a very good audience. Later Tom Williams, Lady Megan Lloyd George and Lord Jowitt each gave a meeting, whilst John Parker gave two days and a neighbour, Lord Wise, helped on several occasions.

Our rural campaign started on May 16th with nine meetings in the evening, six of which were in the open air. This meant brief speeches, coming straight to a few points, getting them well home and then answering questions.

Later we reached 15 meetings in an evening. None was let down. Audiences were better than at previous elections. Most meetings were hand-billed and leaflets were left in every house. The women electors attended

in greater numbers so the attack on the cost of living fell on receptive ears.

An average of over eleven meetings an evening for nine days, together with some afternoon and midday meetings, indicates the tempo of our campaign.

The Tory candidate, a very hard worker, around whom they had woven a brilliant halo, in his election address for 1951, when he was successful, had included a photograph of himself surrounded by a herd of pigs. Those pigs and the low prices they fetched on the market, together with the high price of pork and bacon, followed him everywhere. Country people understand country things.

In calling on one old lady of eighty years I discovered that her national assistance allowance had been reduced by sixpence more than the increase in her old age pension. Mentioning this at the meetings I soon discovered that all pensioners in receipt of national assistance had been disappointed.

Thus I developed a three-pronged attack. The high cost of living; the undermining of confidence in agriculture, and the shabby treatment of those in receipt of national assistance in the recent pensions increase.

Dartford votes Labour

by Joan Wicken

THE candidate was selected on 1st May. Up to that time not only had there been no candidate, there was no agent, no committee rooms, no office equipment or stationery, and the constituency party officers had been elected less than two months before.

There was no one who knew the constituency as a whole because it was made up after redistribution from four old constituencies. The new secretary was himself a candidate in another area, as was one of the vice-presidents.

The new seat was generally believed to be a marginal one, but this was pure guesswork. The only centralised records available and passed over to the agent on 3rd May was a list of General Committee delegates, and this did not distinguish

between Party representatives, Trade Union delegates, nor did it indicate which of the delegates were secretaries.

This appeared to be hardly an auspicious state of organisation to start the election at so late a date. The result, however, was a 4,198 majority on a 81 per cent poll.

Coming into Dartford from the outside, knowing no part of the constituency and none of the individuals in it, had a great number of disadvantages, but these were probably outweighed by the fact that it was generally realised that I could have no local or personal loyalties!

It was quite obvious to me from the beginning that there would be many things which would not be done in the short time left. There was certainly no time to do the normal agent's work of building up local organisations strong enough to carry through an efficient elec-

tion day organisation.

In fact, during the course of the campaign we did manage to get some polling day organisation in four places where there was not in existence a regular committee or party. This was almost entirely through the initiative of people in nearby villages.

The first thing was obviously to get a committee room, some equipment and some means of transport. We were fortunate here in having a co-operative candidate, and perhaps doubly fortunate that the Co-op. Committee was meeting on Monday 2nd. The next morning we were told that we could have the use of a house which was awaiting demolition, and had been empty for a year.

The women whom we contacted to clean it up did a magnificent job in getting the jam off the floor and the cobwebs from the ceiling. It was a spacious place, and though hardly remarkable for dryness or beauty served the purpose better than many regular Labour Party offices.

I installed the agent's office at the top of the very steep stairs in the hope of some quiet, which, of course, did not really come off. A typewriter was hired at a cost of 30s. a month and a duplicator was borrowed from Gestetner, who obviously hoped to sell it to us at the time, but still left it for our use when told that this would not be possible.

ARRANGING MEETINGS

Having achieved so much the next job was to arrange meetings, the publication of the Election Address and any other literature and obtain workers both centrally and locally.

Most meetings were organised by sending out the treasurer in his car to spots on a map, and asking him to find a hall or school in the vicinity—the official list of schools and halls was not available until almost all the meetings had been organised.

This rather hit and miss affair did result, of course, in some hits and misses! In a couple of places we got a building which was, in fact, too large or some distance from the main centre of population.

One important place was left out altogether because the only way of getting a meeting there was to rearrange at least three others, which cannot easily be done in a high pressure campaign at a later date.

In the end we had 23 indoor meetings

with a normal attendance between 30 and 70, although at the eve of poll meeting attendances at all three meetings ran into hundreds.

We had some speakers allocated from Regional Office, but apart from Ernest Davis and Lord Henderson these were no known names. The meetings were advertised in the press and by the distribution of printed handbills, mostly on the evening before.

Whenever a loudspeaker worked we advertised the meetings between 5.30 and 7.30 p.m., and we did find that the attendances were higher when this was possible.

Unfortunately, the loudspeakers—when discovered—were very makeshift affairs (except one which was lent for one week by a Labour Party campaigner in another area) and they had a habit of giving out just at the wrong moment, despite devoted help from an electrician. However, they were useful and one of the Party supporters put a van at our disposal more or less for the whole of the last fortnight of the campaign.

The final draft of the Election Address was in the hands of the printer by 9th May—the same day as we received our 60,000 election envelopes for writing up. Wherever possible we distributed envelopes for people to do in their own homes, paying very little regard to getting people to write up their own locality, but concentrating on getting them all done and returned by the 19th.

We also made arrangements for people to write in the Committee Room and all filling and checking was done centrally. For this purpose the response of workers—mainly from Dartford Borough itself—was magnificent.

There were several occasions on which we had more workers than chairs. Filling especially went on to the early hours of the morning at the end and an address to every elector was in the post by the 21st.

POSTAL VOTES

We were, of course, a little late starting to do much on postal votes, although this was the subject of my first circular and some action had been taken during the local election canvassing. The candidate and a small party of women did a house-to-house canvass on several days in new council estates in the rural area to which people had moved from the Borough.

As a result of last-minute efforts like this, the postal vote was not so predomi-

nantly against the Labour candidate as frequently happens. The Tories also were not very efficient and the total number of postal votes was only about 1,200.

In addition to the Election Address we distributed 18,000 copies of a Co-op. Press election special and about 22,000 copies of a leaflet giving biographical notes on the candidate and a message from his wife, neither of which was incorporated in the Election Address.

The leaflet especially proved very popular and met a very great need among the electorate, especially in the rural area, as the candidate, although a councillor (who incidentally was re-elected during the General Election Campaign) was not known at all outside the Borough.

The distribution of this material and of some other leaflets was fairly thorough in the predominantly industrial area in the north of the constituency, but even in the more scattered and agricultural areas we managed to get a fairly good distribution.

CANVASSING

Canvassing was, of course, a headache. Where there was a strong local organisation, as in most parts of the borough, a fairly good coverage had been made for the local elections, but it was only really in the last week that a great deal was done specially for the General Election.

For the numerous places where local organisation was weak, or non-existent, a volunteer canvassing officer organised trips into the rural area on Sunday mornings and on some evenings.

We also had a party of women from the Erith and Crayford constituency on one day and some U.S.D.A.W. members came down from London to help. This was invaluable and we felt it worth while doing a canvass even in places where we could not follow this up on polling day.

The information gained has been retained for future reference and the people contacted were given a reminder about the election and given some material upon which to reflect.

For polling day itself a member of the Executive took over the responsibility of transport, reallocating cars as necessary and dealing with all the crises which occurred on this matter.

Both the candidate and myself did independent tours of Committee Rooms, and every one of them was covered by one or other of us.

We also had a few workers in a central

pool who were shifted from place to place as necessary. But our considered policy on polling day was to concentrate our efforts in the areas of the strongest known Labour vote. Cars and workers were concentrated in the industrial belt and in some of these polling stations we had a 93 per cent poll.

FINE RESULT

It will have become obvious from what has been said that this was not a well-organised campaign. I think, however, that it can be said to have been a well-improvised campaign.

The spirit of the numerous workers was excellent. We not only all worked hard, but all enjoyed working hard.

The candidate was extremely helpful; given a car and loudspeaker he went out on his own or with one or two supporters and conducted his own street corner meetings and loudspeaker talks.

The factory gate meetings were also left almost entirely to him. We did in some cases manage to circulate some handbills through the shop stewards, but on other occasions advantage was taken of an obvious exodus from a factory when a loudspeaker was in the vicinity. This was again, of course, another case of the necessary records not existing.

The result in Dartford was, I consider, one of the finest in the country. Obviously there was more Labour support there than we realised, but still it remains true that the high poll was the result of really hard work.

The hard work was itself very largely the result of local initiative. It was in very few cases that I managed to go into the outlying areas and personally contact the workers there. We did, of course, keep all General Committee delegates and other volunteers in touch with the plans and progress as frequently as possible by letter (a volunteer sheet was circulated at the very beginning), but the response to correspondence is not always so good.

I cannot stress too often that the response of the workers was magnificent. They frequently volunteered for one job and were given another. They frequently came for half an hour and were given a job lasting an hour; they even sometimes came for a sit down between jobs and got another one given them.

But there was no complaining, and although the Committee Rooms may at times have looked a little chaotic to an outside observer, a very great deal of work

was done or arranged there.

Ideally, of course, there should in circumstances like these have been much more decentralisation than in fact occurred. It was a county constituency, although a small one, but the fact of it being made up of four old constituencies should have enabled it to fall easily into four districts for sub-agents. Unfortunately, however, the big disadvantage of arriving at a constituency so late in the day made it very difficult to appoint people for such posts.

ENJOYABLE TIME

The obvious people in a couple of cases were working in other constituencies and the obvious transport officer had already undertaken to work in the remains of the old Dartford Constituency. Other people were not able to get the necessary time off, and indeed the only full-time help which we had until polling day was the Secretary of the Co-op. Party, who acted as clerk in the Central Committee Room.

In future, the area will be much better

placed in many matters, but I do not think it will be possible to get a better atmosphere in which to fight an election. We really felt that we had our backs to the wall and that every ounce of effort was necessary if we were to get a Labour M.P.

I found again that people enjoy fighting when they realise that their individual efforts are important; I think we agents sometimes under-estimate this attitude. We had more than the usual number of mishaps (perhaps the strangest was when a worker told to take the car registration slip to a driver at the other end of the constituency left it for him at the Tory Committee Rooms!), but we did not have anything like the normal amount of grievances or complaints from workers about what was being done or not done.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable election and the result gave considerable satisfaction to those who were wearing red or red and white rosettes—we never did sort out which our colours were!

Organisation won Rugby

by J. W. Holmes

IN Rugby a majority of 199 in 1951, in a straight fight with the Tories, was increased to 1,378 in 1955, in a three-cornered contest; the third man being an Independent candidate whose main item of policy was the abolition of the H-bomb.

On what do we base our success? Of primary importance is the fact that we possessed the finest candidate we could wish for in James Johnson. Secondly, built upon a sound foundation, a wonderful team rallied at the right time.

Rugby is a county constituency, the electorate being divided as follows: 33,000 within the Borough of Rugby and approximately 14,000 in the Rugby Rural District. Our ward organisation in the borough follows the general pattern of the Party.

Each year prior to the local elections an extensive canvass has taken place which has provided us with an accurate record of support, and our polling day machinery has been under constant review. Local

elections have provided a sound training ground and we are now in the position of being able to call upon an efficient body of workers at any time.

The main villages have been organised during the past four years and they have really proved their worth during this campaign. I place great value on personal contact with my key workers, especially in the rural areas—this is far more rewarding than the issue of impersonal directives from local headquarters.

Since 1950, Labour's representation on rural, borough and county councils has been consistently bettered and on every occasion the average poll has been in the region of 66 per cent.

Head Office has given us valuable aid. A limited grant assisted in the purchase of a motor van, which I feel to be as essential as an office. This enables me to keep in personal contact with the scattered villages. A second grant enabled us to employ a full time canvasser for some six weeks. This was indeed a sound investment. Not only did she push up our Postal Votes to an unprecedented figure

but also she obtained an up-to-date record of removals and rejoined many lapsed members.

Head Office allocated a party of students for a week's canvassing—we put them to work in difficult areas and they made 200 members. I cannot overstress the value of the aid obtained in the ways already described and consider it to be of infinitely more value than thousands of pounds spent on subsidised literature.

THIRD MAN

In the General Election our main aim was to hold the seat at all costs. The entry of a third candidate—announced at rather a late date—with his policy which appealed to many of our members made us rather apprehensive, but any divergencies of view were submerged in the common desire to send a Labour man back to represent Rugby. The campaign opened on a quiet note but enthusiasm mounted and an intelligent electorate quickly grasped the basic issues.

When planning the campaign we gave serious thought to the effectiveness of meetings, but it was decided to continue our previous policy of holding meetings in every part of the constituency, enabling the electorate to hear and question the candidate.

A total of 50 meetings were held, on the whole well attended, the electorate being far more interested in domestic issues than in any one subject of wider interest. The peak of our meetings programme was the visit of Clem Attlee which filled the largest hall in the constituency to overflowing.

Loudspeaker work was extensive; three units were used. A regular feature of our local and national elections is to station a loudspeaker unit at the entrance to the two main factories which employ nearly 15,000 workers. This operation commences two days prior to the election, each day we catch the workers going in at 7 a.m., at lunch time and again when they leave in the evening.

The candidate, travelling in a loudspeaker car, made contact with literally thousands of the electorate. He was received everywhere with the enthusiasm accorded to an M.P. who has consistently and without party prejudice, looked after the interests of his constituents.

As the local elections were taking place only a fortnight before the General Election an extensive canvass was carried out to cover both. After the local contests

were over all 'fors' and 'doubtfuls' were once again visited.

Most of the villages conducted their own canvass, but also a mobile squad of 'star' canvassers was available to cover any weak spots in either the borough or the rural area. On the average 20 people each night for a fortnight before polling day conducted an extensive canvass. The effect on morale, especially in the heretofore 'sleepy' villages, was tremendous.

Insurance Agents were contacted to seek out and sign up all Labour supporters who were eligible to vote by post. They were provided with the information booklet and postal voting application forms. Later they were asked to give every assistance in the completion of formalities when the postal ballot papers were received.

On polling day, 90 per cent of the constituency was covered by committee rooms, staffed by key workers and backed up by an army of 'knockers up'. The uncovered part was made up of very small villages and hamlets. The maximum number of cars were registered and used. It is pleasing to note that due to our good canvass record the cars were fetching people to the poll who really needed them. By 8.30 p.m. our workers were able to report that the last few electors were voting.

GOOD POLL

In spite of the fact that over 500 old people were away on an organised holiday, and not able to vote, we managed to get a poll of over 84 per cent.

We had 4,000 window bills printed; the bulk of these were displayed. Wherever one went in the constituency one was met by an array of Johnson's window bills. We also produced our own 'last minute' literature, which was distributed the day before polling day. Many thousands of the Head Office leaflet 'Have You Voted?' were overprinted with the candidate's name and were used very effectively.

Headquarters was staffed by an assistant and a clerk for six weeks before the election, enabling me to move about the constituency.

To sum up: I would say that essentials for victory are a good candidate who is prepared to work continuously from one election to the other; a sound organisation, maintained by a full-time staff, giving special attention to membership and postal voting; and an efficient team of election workers who will rally at the right time.

PARTY ORGANISATION REQUISITES

PRICE LIST

BOOKS:

- Party Organisation — 1 copy 1s. 8d.; 6, 8s.; 12, 15s.
 How the Labour Party Works — 1 copy 8d.; 12, 5s. 6d.; 24, 10s. 6d.
 Guide to Public Speaking — 1 copy 1s. 8d.; 6, 8s.; 12, 15s.
 Conduct of Parliamentary Elections — 7s.
 Conduct of Local Elections — 1 copy 1s. 9d.; 6, 7s. 6d.; 12, 13s. 6d.
 (state England & Wales, or London, or Scotland)
 Labour Organiser (monthly) — 1 copy 6s. 6d. per annum.

LEAFLETS:

- Dear Neighbour (membership leaflet) — 1,000 copies 25s.
 Invitation to a Party (appeal to "Y" voters) — 1,000 copies 30s.
 Me, an Idealist? (Youth leaflet) — 1,000 copies 25s.
 Trade Unionists and Politics — 100 copies 3s. 6d.; 500, 15s.
 About the Labour Party — 6 copies 6d.; 12, 1s.; 50, 3s. 100, 5s. 6d.
 Members Transfer Form — 100 copies 6d.; 1,000, 4s.
 Postal Voting — 1,000 copies 10s.
 Postal Votes (12-page pamphlet) — 1 copy 4d.; 12, 1s. 8d.; 50, 5s.

Collectors' Books — 3d. each.

Collectors' Pads — 6d. each.

Membership Application Cards — 1,000 copies 20s.

Stamps for Membership Cards in booklet form

(supplied to Party officials only).

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| 360 Stamps at 1d. printed in Red | 3d. per booklet |
| 120 " " 2d. " " Blue | 2d. " " |
| 120 " " 3d. " " Green | 2d. " " |
| 120 " " 4d. " " Yellow | 2d. " " |
| 120 " " 6d. " " Grey | 2d. " " |
| 120 " " 1s. " " Black | 2d. " " |

Constitution and Standing Orders — 1 copy 6d.; 12, 3s. 9d.

Model Rules—Set A, Set B & C, Set D & E, Set F, Set G — 1 copy 6d.;
 12, 3s. 9d.

POSTERS:

Labour Party Meeting — 1 copy 4d.; 12, 2s.; 50, 7s.

Labour Club — 1 copy 4d.; 12, 2s.; 50, 7s.

Labour Week (window bill) — 1,000 copies 10s.

Who Can Vote by Post — 6 copies 1s.

Labour Party Badges (stud or brooch style) — 1s. 6d. each; 15s. per doz.

League of Youth Badges (stud or brooch style) — 2s. each; 21s. per doz.

Printer's Block of Party Badge — 6s. 6d. each.

All prices include postage

Please use block letters when ordering

FROM LABOUR PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

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